

1 REMARKS

2 Status of the Claims

3 Claims 1-27 remain pending in the application, Claim 1 having been amended to more clearly  
4 distinguish the recited subject matter from the cited art, Claims 10 and 11 having been amended to  
5 recite "medium" as opposed to "media," and Claim 12 having been amended to correct a grammatical  
6 error to change "...software query..." to "...plain language query," thus correcting an antecedent  
7 basis issue with "...software query."

8 Claims Rejected Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

9 The Examiner has rejected Claims 1-27 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) as being unpatentable by  
10 "Slennox's eggdrop page"; April 11, 2001 (hereinafter referred to as "Slennox"). Applicants  
11 respectfully disagree with this rejection for the reasons below.

12 In the interest of reducing the complexity of the issues for the Examiner to consider in this  
13 response, the following discussion focuses on independent Claims 1, 12, 21, 26, and 27. The  
14 patentability of each dependent claim is not necessarily separately addressed in detail. However,  
15 applicants' decision not to discuss the differences between the cited art and each dependent claim  
16 should not be considered as an admission that applicants concur with the Examiner's conclusion that  
17 these dependent claims are not patentable over the cited references. Similarly, applicants' decision  
18 not to discuss differences between the prior art and every claim element, or every comment made by  
19 the Examiner, should not be considered as an admission that applicants concur with the Examiner's  
20 interpretation and assertions regarding those claims. Indeed, applicants believe that all of the  
21 dependent claims patentably distinguish over the references cited. However, a specific traverse of the  
22 rejection of each dependent claim is not required, since dependent claims are patentable for at least  
23 the same reasons as the independent claims from which the dependent claims ultimately depend.

24 Patentability of Independent Claim 1

25 Significant differences exist between the subject matter claimed by applicants and the cited art,  
26 because Slennox does NOT teach enabling the user to enter a plain language message which is then  
27 transmitted to the software resource (as recited in steps (c) and (d)).

28 It may be helpful to illustrate an exemplary application of applicants' claimed subject matter.  
29 As an example of the recitation in step (c), as shown in FIGURE 3, a user such as John, is enabled to  
30 enter a plain language message (i.e. message 158) such as "HOW MANY EMPLOYEES IN MY

DIVISION ARE ENROLLED IN A HEALTH PLAN” within an online chat session user interface (e.g., in a message window 160 of an instant message dialogue box 140, as indicated in applicants’ specification, page 12, lines 12-14). Then, as an example of the recitation in step (d), the plain language message is transmitted to the software resource (e.g., John selects a send button 164 or simply depresses the return key on the keyboard, as indicated in applicants’ specification, page 12, lines 14-16).

In contrast, Slennox does not teach a plain language message, but instead teaches commands. The Examiner asserts that Slennox discloses the recited elements in applicants’ step (c) and in support of his assertion, he cites the commands supplied to the bot. Specifically, Slennox discloses “You type in Eggdrop commands by preceding them with a period (e.g. .help, .bots, .whom, .+chan, etc.)” (Slennox, “Using Your Eggdrop, page 1 of 7.) However, these commands entered in Slennox are not equivalent to a plain text message, such as “HOW MANY EMPLOYEES IN MY DIVISION ARE ENROLLED IN A HEALTH PLAN.” Note that Slennox imposes a required format, of including a “period” before a word or an abbreviated word. Thus, these commands, with their required format, are NOT text messages or plain language messages but instead, are in a specific required command format. It follows then that Slennox does NOT teach or suggest transmitting plain language messages, but instead, Slennox teaches transferring commands specified for controlling a computer.

Accordingly, for the reasons discussed above, the rejection of Claim 1 should be withdrawn because the cited art does NOT teach enabling a user to enter a *plain language message* and transmitting it. Also, Claims 2-11 depend from independent Claim 1 and are also patentable for at least the reasons discussed above. Accordingly, the rejection of dependent Claims 2-11 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) over Slennox should be withdrawn.

#### Patentability of Independent Claim 12

Independent Claim 12 is directed towards a method for accessing information available through a software resource during a messaging service session. Significant differences exist between the subject matter claimed by applicants and the cited art, because Slennox does NOT teach enabling the user to enter a plain language query, which is then transmitted to the software resource (as recited in steps (b) and (c)). The Examiner has rejected Claim 12 as unpatentable over Slennox and has applied this reference to steps (b) and (c) in a manner based on reasoning similar to that applied in rejecting Claim 1. Although steps (b) and (c) recite “a plain language *query*” as opposed to “a plain language *message*” as

recited in Claim 1, applicants' above example still applies. As in the example, a user message is not only produced in plain text but is also produced in the form of a query, or question because in this example, John, the user, is asking how many employees in his division are enrolled in a health plan. Thus, for the same reasons presented above in traversing the rejection of independent Claim 1, independent Claim 12 also distinguishes over the cited art, because the cited art does NOT teach enabling the user to enter a plain language query, which is then transmitted to the software resource, because plain language queries, like plain language messages, are not equivalent to formatted commands that provide a control input to a computer.

Accordingly, for the reasons discussed, the rejection of Claim 12 should be withdrawn because the cited art does NOT teach transmitting plain language queries and subsequently transmitting them. Also, Claims 13-20 depend from independent Claim 12 and are also patentable for at least the reasons discussed above. Accordingly, the rejection of dependent Claims 13-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) over Slennox should be withdrawn.

Patentability of Independent Claim 21

Independent Claim 21 is directed towards a system for enabling a software resource to respond as a conventional participant in a messaging service session implemented over a network. Significant differences exist between the subject matter claimed by applicants and the cited art, because Slennox does NOT teach enabling the user to enter a plain language query for information to be obtained from the software resource as recited in subparagraph (b)(iii). The Examiner has rejected Claim 21 as unpatentable over Slennox and has applied this reference to subparagraph (b)(iii) in a manner based on reasoning similar to that applied in rejecting Claim 1. Although subparagraph (b)(iii) recites "a plain language *query*" as opposed to "a plain language *message*" as recited in Claim 1, applicants' example pertaining to the user John still applies, because in the example, John's message is not only produced in plain text, but is also produced in the form of a query, or question. In the example given above, John is inquiring how many employees in his division are enrolled in a health plan. Thus, for the same reasons presented above in traversing the rejection of independent Claim 1, independent Claim 21 also distinguishes over the cited art; the cited art does NOT teach enabling the user to enter a plain language query. Plain language queries (and plain language messages) are not equivalent to formatted commands that control computers based upon use of a predefined form or syntax.

Accordingly, for the reasons discussed, the rejection of Claim 21 should be withdrawn. Also, Claims 22-25 depend from independent Claim 21 and are also patentable for at least the reasons discussed above. Accordingly, the rejection of dependent Claims 22-25 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) over Slennox should be withdrawn.

#### Patentability of Independent Claim 26

Independent Claim 26 is directed towards an apparatus that enables a user to interact with a software resource during a messaging service session. Significant differences exist between the subject matter claimed by applicants and the cited art, because Slennox does NOT teach enabling the user to enter a plain language query with the user input device, as recited in subparagraph (c)(iii). The Examiner has rejected Claim 26 as unpatentable over Slennox and has applied this reference to subparagraph (c)(iii) in a manner based on reasoning similar to that applied in rejecting Claim 1. Although subparagraph (c)(iii) recites “a plain language *query*” and not “a plain language *message*,” as recited in Claim 1, applicants’ example pertaining to the user John still applies.

Thus, for the same reasons presented above in traversing the rejection of independent Claim 1, independent Claim 26 also distinguishes over the cited art, because the cited art does NOT teach enabling the user to enter a plain language query with the user input device, because plain language queries, like plain language messages, are not equivalent to formatted machine commands. Accordingly, the rejection of Claim 26 should be withdrawn.

#### Patentability of Independent Claim 27

Independent Claim 27 is directed towards an apparatus that enables a software resource to interact as a participant during a messaging service session. Significant differences exist between the subject matter claimed by applicants and the cited art, because Slennox does NOT teach parsing a plain language query received from a user during a messaging service session, as recited in subparagraph (c)(ii). The Examiner has rejected Claim 27 as unpatentable over Slennox and has applied this reference to subparagraph (c)(ii) and cited the command reference and format of Slennox. However, as described above in the traversal of the Examiner’s rejection of Claim 1, the *formatted commands* of Slennox are not equivalent to a plain text query, such as “HOW MANY EMPLOYEES IN MY DIVISION ARE ENROLLED IN A HEALTH PLAN.” This exemplary query includes basic text terms and is not in a required format as taught by the cited art for the Slennox commands.

1 Thus, independent Claim 27 also distinguishes over the cited art, because the cited art does NOT  
2 teach parsing the plain language query received from a user during a messaging service session.  
3 Accordingly, the rejection of Claim 27 should be withdrawn.

4 In view of the Remarks set forth above, it will be apparent that the claims remaining in this  
5 application define a novel and non-obvious invention, and that the application is in condition for  
6 allowance and should be passed to issue without further delay. Should any further questions remain, the  
7 Examiner is invited to telephone applicants' attorney at the number listed below.

8 Respectfully submitted,

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11 /sabrina k. macintyre/  
12 Sabrina K. MacIntyre  
13 Registration No. 56,912

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